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Writing into or drawing from? Self-manifestation through movement in contemporary writing of space

Abstract:

Contemporary Australian cultural studies has seen a move towards a multimodal awareness of space and place in writing – a speculative turn in both critical and creative work confronting the subject/object dichotomy as a limitation in place-making. Theorists such as Ross Gibson, Stephen Muecke and Michael Farrell offer beautiful conceptualisations of written spaces, drawing from several philosophical traditions, which might give context to contemporary creative practices. This writing regularly draws from movement as an integral feature of the practice discussed, with walking emerging in several approaches to re-envision the poet wanderer. But it is also possible to trace in this writing an act of self-manifestation, a desire for the 'doing-making' of self to be inscribed within the multimodal spaces created. This paper will argue that this layering of self and space in the act of writing is both akin to and actively opposing the tradition of Romantic thought. While several features of the practices invoked might seem to draw from similar acts of immersion in landscape, the underlying trope of the Romantic poet's divine communion is inverted in the speculative drive towards multimodal relation.

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I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills…

(Wordsworth 1807:49)

The opening lines of Wordsworth's most famous poem play into a trope of Romantic poetry – the unceasing engagement of the poet with the natural space, through walking and exploring. But many discussions of the piece, and of Wordsworth's writing in general, tend to focus more directly on the natural scene – the interpretation of the central motif of the poem, the daffodils, which offer the poet both contentment and a form of self-manifestation. Paul H. Fry describes Wordsworth as engaging in an ontological discourse with his observations of natural scenes, writing a nature which "responds to human desire by communicating, among other things, ethical lessons ('philosophy'), and Wordsworth is the supreme poet of this communion" (Fry 1996: 536). It is the ontological engagement with nature which offers transcendence. "Wordsworth's observation is trained … on the point of intersection between human and non-human being in order to reveal something" (Fry 1996: 539-540). In this, the act of moving through the natural space is a conduit. The walking in 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' allows for the chance discovery of the daffodils, and configures the pause, that moment of dancing flowers, as transcendental. But this stress on movement as a conduit diminishes awareness that there might be something meaningful in the wandering itself, specifically in the manner in which such movement constructs the terms of the transcendental encounter.

Nandi Chinna has conceptualised this process of walking and writing as 'poepatetics', an act of creation through the physical engagement with landscape that walking offers. "More simply put, poepatetics is 'making from walking'. Although the word is new, poepatetics has a long history reflected in the poetry of Matsuo Bashō in the seventeenth century through to Wordsworth, Dickens, Whitman, Thoreau …" (Chinna 2015: 54-55). Reading the Romantic practice of walking and writing through Chinna's theory would suggest that the transcendent moment in Wordsworth's famous poem arises directly from the wandering with which it opens. Poepatetics, she argues, combines "the observed phenomena, the subjective bodily experience, and transcription of both the tangible and enigmatic into the text" (Chinna 2015: 55). In framing her praxis through movement, Chinna joins a growing group of contemporary Australian writers and scholars who emphasise the need to move beyond stasis in creative practice, specifically when writing place and space.

As a trend, this scholarship has arguably emerged out of a desire to move away from postcolonial structures in understanding the white Australian relationship to country. There is an inescapable politics present here, as in any study of white Australian engagement with the national space. In some senses, the presence of colonialism within the postcolonial preordains the possibilities for white Australians in relating to country. An anxiety of place pushes at the seams of this discourse, a need to find alternate modes of subjective engagement, which will ensure colonial discourses and manoeuvres are not subconsciously replicated or given power. Chinna's interest is typical of this, reaching for a productive methodology which can negotiate the "challenges of living in the Anthropocene" (Chinna 2015: 51) to offer a connection with the environment and simultaneously a way to feel and acknowledge the grief of environmental damage that the walking witnesses.

> To walk is to encounter the temporal and spatial limits of the body … In this sense, poepatetics encounters the limits of the world/self/language in relation to any discovery of what can be said about the same, and these limits represent a kind of existential incompleteness or loss, which is homesickness. What the poepatetic practitioner is

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striding (and striving) towards is a re-imagining and reframing of these physical and textual boundaries (Chinna 2015: 59).

For Chinna, thus, poepatetic practice is a negotiation of self and space, which acknowledges loss and some aspect of social guilt in drawing a relationship with the terrain experienced. The writing which emerges gives witness to the space, is responsive rather than constructive, and in this way attempts to allow the space a power within the relationship which it is denied in society's more normative occupation of space. In this essay, I wish to trace the development of such thinking in the Australian setting, and examine the manner in which the subsequent ideas both relate to aspects of Romanticism and at the same time diverge from the Romantic subjectivity. In focusing on the relation between subject and space, there is some possibility of understanding not only how we might productively write space and place, but also how we might understand self in response to the creative act.

Beneath Chinna's practice arguably lies some awareness of our tendency as a society to create landscape through the subject-object relationship. Barbara Bender demonstrates this most succinctly, perhaps, in suggesting that in "the contemporary Western world we 'perceive' landscapes, we are the point from which the 'seeing' occurs. It is thus an ego-centred landscape, a perspectival landscape, a landscape of views and vistas" (Bender 1993: 1). This is the sense in which the term originated, as the construction of space based on a subjective viewing. On a broader scale, Ross Gibson suggests that as soon as land is:

> …represented and dramatized within images, sounds and stories, it is no longer land. Rather, it is landscape; it has been translated and utilized as an element of myth… There is no such thing as a pristine landscape. There may be an *image* of pristinity (or of beauty, or of innocence, etc.), but such a thing cannot *mean* anything outside cultural systems (Gibson 1992: 75).

Such viewing is socially ingrained and feels entirely normal. It underpins, for instance, the transcendental moment in Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', where he is both anthropomorphising the flowers and taking them as 'a show', communicating his subjective experience of the space. Rather than existing as inherent to the space itself, the transcendence emerges in his appreciation: the 'wealth the show to me had brought'. Moreover, this is an act of viewing which places subject (viewer) and object (landscape) in direct opposition. Marjorie Levinson, for example, presents six different readings of Wordsworth's encounter with the daffodils and then notes in comparing them that "they are all dramas of representation, *of* meaning *about* and *performing*. The proto-subject splits down a words/things, self/other, concepts/intuitions, culture/nature divide with the first term gaining control – ownership – of the second" (Levinson 2010: 641). The Romantic landscape understood thus is the product of subjective determination in writing, where Chinna's poepatetics, in focusing on movement, would see this relationship between self and space opened to negotiation.

Levinson's 'drama of representation', and the inherent sense that the physical space can become objectified through a subject's representation of it, is problematic in the Australian context. The subjective position for white Australians carries with it histories of colonisation, violence and racism, as well as, in the contemporary setting, an awareness of socially-wrought ecological damage. Chinna turns to walking as a way to undermine this impulse. She is not alone in doing so – several other critics rely on movement as a means of opening the closed circuit between subject and object. In recognising the problematic impulse of objectification behind the construction of landscape in *South of the West* (1992), Gibson develops his argument into a discussion of postcolonialism and its weaknesses as a critical response to this dilemma. More recently, Gibson has moved into a form of critical practice which like Chinna embraces movement as a means of

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engagement. Through both *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (2002) and *26 Views of the Starburst World* (2012), Gibson writes place through a practice based in the constant shifting of perspective, coupled with the introduction of several alternate theoretical possibilities, which are allowed to advance distinct conversations in relation to the place. In taking up the terminology of perspective – actively responding to these different forays as 'views' – he develops a conceptualisation of the subjective involvement in the construction of place and recognises the (multiple) cultural systems at play. But he also demands that the subject respond to the physical space, rather than dictate the terms on which it is to be known. The essay 'Changescapes', for instance, opens a conceptualisation of landscapes as systems, highly mutable, "dynamic, tendency-governed, ever reactive" (Gibson 2010: 24). These changescapes are predicated on a delicate balance of subjective involvement in a distinct temporal and spatial context. The participant in the space contributes energy through a dedicated relationship, one which is markedly responsive. In its continued existence, then, the system is "not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but also by the intricate *relationships* between those components." (Gibson 2010: 29) Objectification of the space is, in the emphasis on continued relationships, rendered near impossible.

More recently again, Gibson has continued with similar work in the context of digital technology by examining the capacities of Google Earth and Google Street View to create a space for subjective involvement. It is easy to assume that objectification of physical space is a necessary component of these technologies, but Gibson argues for the potential of interaction with the raw material of Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) mapping. This interaction, he suggests, can turn on its head the subject-object relationship on which the mapping process inherently depends. The camera – the trundling "stumble-cam" (Gibson 2014: 257) of the mobile camera which creates Google Street View – opens up the space to further user involvement as the camera's viewing, in and of itself, is without narrative, aimless in the sense that no intention to collect data is presumed. In doing so, it also expands the practice of mapping in a unique way, forcing it beyond its normal context of land demarcation (and the related undertones of possession, acquisition, objectification and control). "Instead of the colonial narrative drive… we encounter diffused or 'ambient' perspectives and divergent through lines [sic]" (Gibson 2014: 261). This mapping, for Gibson, undoes the subject-object relationship in representing a space. The map produced:

> [I]s no longer the old Cartesian thing we thought we knew, no longer an abstract and rigidly coordinated arraignment purporting to offer disinterested orientation by addressing every surveyor equally and objectively. Once you have become a participant… then the system is dynamic, reactive and not separate from you. It is not simply an object to your subject (Gibson 2014: 251).

Equally, the automated nature of the car's image-capturing means that the subject's power of representation is responsive rather than proactive. The subject-object relationship is not simply undermined, it is inherently opened up to the participation of multiple subjects: the camera, holding some sense of self-determination, as well as the potentially multiple engaged users.

Gibson does, however, introduce the caution that movement is not enough to undermine the subject-object relationship in representing physical spaces and creating either landscape or place. He points to the tendency of colonial accounts of space to be built around continued movement – a form of writing he refers to as the "*traversal* account" (Gibson 2014: 259), based on travel across country with the aim of possessing it, either figuratively or literally. This is an approach to space which offers "self-assertion and continuous acquisition" (Gibson 2014: 259), generally configured as "colonial prospectuses, tabulations of assets and entrepreneurial opportunities." (Gibson 2014: 259)

Similar sensations are manifest still in the stretch of a standard printed map, defining nation by representation of the implicated, politically determined space. As a counter to this, Gibson insists on movement which diminishes the dominance of a culturally implicated, fixed subjective position. The movement of GIS mapping, for example, opens the space to several subjective perspectives, each of which must engage with the next to configure the space through their multiple relationships. It is a system in the same sense as the changescape. The subjective position is invited to be involved, but not allowed to become definitive. Perhaps the etymological roots of 'perspective' are invoked, here: the subject exists in looking *through* ('per') a specific position, but is not fixed or limited to that one point of viewing, and thus cannot function to limit the view-as-seen, either. There is a relativity suggested, both to position and approach.

The limitation of Gibson's conceptualisation (from a creative writing perspective, at least) is the difficulty of applying it in a creative process. Beyond the imperative to work through fragmentation and layering, there is no distinct approach articulated for a writing process. Through similar discussions, Stephen Muecke attempts to construct a practice for writing which will achieve a like outcome. Again, the politics of white Australian engagement with place simmer as an imperative beneath his work. Much of his writing has experimented in this way, exploring fictocriticism as well as purely critical or creative possibilities. Both *No Road: Bitumen all the way* (1997) and *Textual Spaces* (2005) can be read as a challenge to contemporary critical practice, allowing creative and anecdotal writing to sit hand in hand with critical insight. More recently, his book-chapter 'Can You Argue with the Honeysuckle?'[1] took up a combination of Indigenous Australian and Continental European philosophies to suggest that place might itself be understood as a mode of being, an existence which is sustained not in the dialectic but by a poetics of doing. Ultinteraka, the 'honeysuckle place', "does not produce an argument about something, it produces life" (Muecke 2010: 41). The place is constantly coming into existence through the production of honey – it is defined by its activity. "*Instead of being*, he does. *In the place of his existence*, an event is always happening" (Muecke 2010: 40). Because of this activity, Muecke suggests the place is not only self-sustaining, but capable of sustaining other existences as well, including the subject which would enter into relation with the place. This is not a writing which attempts to 'undo' colonialism, but to continue 'doing' in more productive ways, recognising colonialism and attempting to prevent its continuation as a system of thought within place-making as a discourse.

This thinking is developed in his essay 'Motorcycles, Snails, Latour: Criticism without Judgement' (2012) as a pathway to writing, an active practice. He outlines Bruno Latour's resistance to the subject-object dichotomy, picking up on a philosophical strain of French Vitalism which builds on a concept of the equilateral agency of all things as existing within a multimodal network of existence. This is not the quotidian usage of the phrase – Muecke is not referring to modes or mediums of communication as one might describe in a text which traverses digital and physical objectivities. His usage of the term extends beyond this, although the principle is the same. When Muecke refers to the multimodal, he is concerned with the existential mode, the manner of being, and the plurality of being(s) within the world. The term 'existence' is applied as readily to historical figures, characters, concepts, emotions and things as it is to biological beings. It expands beyond physical entities. With "the help of Bruno Latour," Muecke says, "I want to think about objects like motorcycles (or humans or snails) as *animated* in their multiple connections, carefully forged and nurtured, rather than following the materialist orthodoxy" (Muecke 2012: 48). Echoing Latour, he describes this orthodoxy, the bifurcation of all existence divided according to status as either a subject or an object, as a "philosophical hammock" (Muecke 2012: 22), a lazy approach to understanding the multitude of existences within the world and the various possibilities their lives represent. His writing takes up "a slogan

like *respect the signature of the thing*." (Muecke 2012: 48) Each existence is allowed to dictate the terms by which we may enter into relation with it, and thus is no longer relegated to the status of an object constructed according to the subjective position.

As an approach, this results in the need for the writer to allow their own subjective position to be rendered unstable and brought under the influence of other existences. The onus is on the writer to engage with "different registers of reality, because 'the world' is not seen as bifurcated, with the 'text' mediating the 'subject' and the 'object', as in older communication models" (Muecke 2012: 42). His approach reconfigures the reader's awareness of the interrelationship between existences, suggesting a practice of writing or criticism which is "actively engaged in creating assemblages or compositions as it goes along" (Muecke 2012: 42). Muecke calls his new practice 'object-oriented writing'. It emphasises the autonomy of existences which lie outside the subjective position. He stresses the notion that "things can exist without being a function of the way humans look at the world, as if everything hung off that relationship" (Muecke 2012: 46), and sees Vitalism in this context as "an alternative thread in continental philosophy which seeks to provide (hopefully) a more realistic vision of collective assemblages of life-forms, where the human (paradoxically for the humanities) finds itself less centred" (Muecke 2012: 41-42). As in Gibson's writing, the subject is essential to the system, but is no longer configured as the determining element. Instead, the writing is seen as an invitation to the involvement of multiple perspectives, and this time even multiple forms of existence beyond the biological.

Muecke writes, for example, of riding his motorbike – "riding a kind of work of art" (Muecke 2012: 44) – and the manner in which riding for him can be understood as a complex system of relation between several modes of existence: he is present, as is the machine. Also, there are fossil fuels powering his movement, carbon atoms travelling a journey of their own through time and space to this new manifestation. His marital relationship is invoked in his wife's concern. The space through which he travels shapes his movement. He responds not only to the road, but to the billboards, signs and sights he encounters. These moments open up associations which spin off through memory and his engagement with the space to recall different places and times. All these existences, Muecke argues, function in a delicate balance to produce the experience to which he as a subject responds – "you can never be sure about the boundaries of material life" (Muecke 2012: 44). His 'object-oriented' writing would see each existence implicated and allowed the dignity of agency in shaping his awareness of the world as a subject – he is making himself receptive to these things, allowing them impact, and writing in response: "Don't we … have to conceive of humans, non-humans and things as equally active agents operating on different registers? Could it be our task to describe the mediations?" (Muecke 2012: 44-45). The practice which emerges in his approach is one which would more actively create or at least maintain the systems Gibson is recognising within his 'changescapes'.

Muecke's practice is contextualised in demanding that we ask "how the literary text is keeping itself alive" (Muecke 2012: 51). A practice of reading might be hazarded in response, one which would understand the text as implicated in a wider network, and thus diminish its authority (or the writer's) in constructing place. While it might be impossible to break from the subjective position in reading, it is again possible to find ways to challenge the dominance of this position. Muecke underlines as much in citing the influence of Vitalism as a philosophical structure for his approach. Latour's writing is partly inspired by the work of French philosopher Etienne Souriau. Latour directly references Souriau in the works Muecke cites. Souriau portrays existence as multimodal, configuring each different mode of existing as independent and capable of holding a specific agency. He lists in example the phenomenon, the thing, fictional beings, God, the

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body, even virtual existence, and notes that the possibilities are infinite. His project is to move towards understanding how these modes function, or more specifically, to understand how the subject might enter into relation with each mode (cf. Souriau 2009). Creation – or 'instauration', as Souriau prefers – emerges from the relations between modes (Souriau 2009: 107). All being, all existence is thus characterised by this multimodality. To borrow from Souriau's lexicon, we might focus on the multimodal in an attempt to challenge the primacy of the subjective viewpoint.

Perhaps it is quite natural to think of writing, or more broadly of language, through this concept of multimodal relation. Philip Mead speaks to poetry as a form of 'networked language'. In his text of that name (2008), Mead suggests that "poetry is networked language in the sense that it is designed to generate meanings through structure and connection" (Mead 2008: 4). In this sense, one might suggest that poetry inherently functions through multimodal relation, as various aspects of poetic syntax, sound patterning and structure cohere through a relationship with the reader-as-interpreter to produce complex meaning. But Mead takes this argument further in exploring language as a system of reference – its semiotic status. The network he describes considers poetry as language relative to the context in which it is produced and read, its worldly reality: "At the same time," he continues, "because it is made of language, it maintains a kind of non-contiguity with the world… that nevertheless it always refers to and is always constituted in relation to" (Mead 2008: 4). The practice suggested in this sense of networking through cultural and social referent, like the practice Muecke espouses, is one based in the interaction between multiple possible subjective perspectives. It is, moreover, divergent from the practice implied in Romanticism, where the poet as subject directly constructs the natural space according to the primacy of his or her experience. Both space and self are defined in this. As Marjorie Levinson describes in reading Wordsworth, "an abstract subjectivity over against an empty objectivity becomes the birth of the 'inward eye' dancing with its memories, a nuptial blessed by bliss" (Levinson 2010: 641-642). There is an implied authority in this subjectivity: the experience of transcendence marks the space. The Romantic subject holds all the power in making manifest the landscape – draws from it, perhaps, but also shapes it according to his or her subjective position and revelations. Barbara Bender's more direct relation of subject-object is implied: the landscape is produced according to the subject's perspective as ego-centred and a determining force (Bender 1993: 1).

Ultimately, both Gibson and Muecke allow Bender's conceptualisation of landscape to stand, as something constructed according to the 'seeing subject', and created through perspective. But they use this subjective involvement as leverage. They open up representations of space by diminishing the power of the subject-object relationship, insisting on the relationship behind the landscape as an ongoing activity, and inviting other subjects, other players as well as the space itself to have an equal involvement in this. This approach would suggest that the subject, implicated in the act of creating place, can equally be affected by their involvement. If the flow of power is no longer simply subject to object, then the subject also stands to be shaped by the process. This is not a difficult proposition. It is generally an acceptable notion that self exists in ways beyond the body, that it is implicated in and even constructed by the spaces which surround us. When I was a little child, I had a trick of blowing air into my shadow, to make myself invisible. It would dissolve slowly, unravel as tiny strands which would float free into the world. And I would feel myself expand, disperse and float out into the world like the seed-heads of a dandelion. When it was all gone, so was I… In this strange imagining there was, I think, some understanding that the question of how we know or make space is inherently also a question of how we know and make the self.

What Muecke and Gibson offer, then, is the possibility of understanding the relationship between self and space as functioning across multiple valencies. I would take up Muecke's phrasing of multimodality, but I want to reach towards something less of a network, less measured and more of a mess. Valency as a concept implies a sense of energy, a specificity of power in relation to a mode of existing. Linguistically, it suggests relationships, or the combinations of elements needed to sustain a grammatical function. Likewise, the force of the preposition in being *across* valencies points to this messiness as a sensation. There is no neat point of connection, but a general overlapping, an engagement which manifests in different ways at different moments or different points. Gibson's use of fragmentation and layering in his *26 Views of the Starburst World* offers this effect within the reading process. In configuring each chapter according to a specific 'view', he insists on a constant repositioning of perspective. Regularly, this is linked to the language of the Eora people as he structures his exploration around Dawes' colonial language diaries. So the imperative to move, to shift, functions across multiple cultures. Between the movement in perspective and movement across cultures, the conceptualisation of space emerges as something fluid. The subject is involved as invited, but – as I have noted already – Gibson constantly works to undermine any sense of a subjective primacy in constructing space. Place is negotiated between multiple interactions of self and space, both physical and textual.

I find it natural, moreover, that my childish imagining of a fluid kind of selfhood embedded in a space was configured through the shadow. Here immediately is one instance wherein the self is spread across the space, layered and duplicated, often stretching and distorting to the point where it is unrecognisable. In thinking through a shadow, subjective position must be brought into question, or at the very least rendered unstable. Writing, as an act and a form of creation, mimics this potential for instability. It is, in a sense, a type of shadow – both inherently connected to us and stretching out and away. It is centred through the self, it offers the capacity for self-representation, but it also exists beyond the self, and as an act occurs within a much wider network of social and cultural input. In considering both reading and writing, Louise Michelle Rosenblatt offers a theory of the 'transactional'. For Rosenblatt, this signifies an awareness of the wider factors which influence both processes, their nature as ongoing events in time, and the open-endedness of reading as continuing the life of the text. This paradigm of thought "requires a break with entrenched habits of thinking. The old stimulus-response, subject-object, individual-social dualisms give way to recognition of transactional relationships" (Rosenblatt 2004: 1364-1365). These transactions are ongoing and dynamic, to be thought of "in terms of reverberations, rapid oscillations, blendings and mutual conditionings" (Rosenblatt 2004: 1368). The self cannot be assured that its relationship with the text-in-production is fixed: "as we are generating the work of art, we are reacting to it" (Rosenblatt 1994: 48). And yet, in another way, writing implicitly reconfirms self-representation. Just as the shadow both distorts a physical body and yet confirms its existence, regardless of the transactional sensations of writing as an act, physically inscribing the pronoun 'I' functions to make manifest and configure the position of self. This is what supports the assertion that any description of physical space in writing incorporates a positionality, and thus creates both for the reader and writer a 'seeing subject'. Thinking like this, writing has the capacity to support a sense of subjective selfhood, but equally the potential to undermine (or at least call into question) the related act of self-representation.

If, as I have argued, the efforts of Gibson and Muecke to unravel subject and object in their writing practices do not undo the inherent capacity of writing to determine a subjective self, but attempt instead to reduce the centrality or authority of any one subjective position, then the emphasis on the existence of place through ongoing and

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mutable relationships has the secondary effect of playing out as a distinct practice for the writing of self. The difference between the Romantic subject, then, and the subjective position put forward by Gibson and Muecke in the contemporary Australian context, could be understood as taking up the opposing extremes of this dual potentiality in writing as an act. The Romantics draw their sense of self from and through the representation of place. Their writing confirms selfhood, and offers the same experience to readers. As Levinson describes:

> We watch, and we share in the dawning awareness of that inner eye, able to reflect on its memories with a kind of Midas touch that not only turns the yellow of the daffodils into the gold of mental wealth, but that with each re-memoration turns primary gold into exponentially more golden, higher-carat versions of itself (Levinson 2010: 642).

Even while Wordsworth wrote as a wandering poet, moving through the landscape to respond to it, his writing functions to define (and constantly redefine) his subjective position – his 'inward eye'. This is not symptomatic only of Wordsworth's poem, either. Sara Crangle identifies a similar trajectory of self-manifestation in the stream of consciousness in Dorothy Wordsworth's diaries (Crangle 2004: 146-148). But by the close of Wordsworth's poem, the experience of the space is of secondary importance to the poetic self which is made manifest in that experience. In contrast, both Gibson and Muecke look to write self into wider networks of spatial being, incorporating multiple existences across different levels and modes. Writing in this context functions to question individual subjectivity and produce a subjective awareness of our existence as implicated in much wider ontological systems of being. The legacy offered by Romanticism in this context might be a heightened awareness of this difference, and a sensation in writing which can make this difference overt in practice. Without appreciating this dual possibility for selfhood within writing, we cannot practically begin to move towards the subjective involvement that Muecke and Gibson promote.

In Australia, where the continuation of colonialism is manifest as continuing social inequality and racism, this shift from the subjective dominance of landscape to an open subjective involvement in place is important to note. Michael Farrell's *Writing Australian Unsettlement* (2015), for instance, makes clear the socially and culturally embedded nature of writing Australian spaces in the postcolonial context. Farrell sets out on an "explicitly reparative" (Farrell 2015: 2) project responding to the erasure of *terra nullius*, built on "the antisystem of unsettlement" (Farrell 2015: 1). He also cites the work of Muecke, Gibson and their contemporaries in doing so. But the very need for such an effort signals the relevance of thinking carefully about subjectivity in the Australian space. In this context, any progression from a writing practice which is based on taking a single (traditionally European) subjective position as supreme or central is a positive step. Along with their fellow critics, Muecke and Gibson insist on place-making as an ongoing relationship between several subjective positions functioning in different ways. Emphasising these possibilities, engaging and responding to multiple different valencies within the interaction between self and space, becomes an effort of combatting the colonial impulse to deny other perspectives. It might well offer a pathway to opening instead more fruitful relationships with(in) the Australian space, and all the various cultures and existences it supports.

Endnotes

[1] Muecke published this work in *Halfway House* (2010), the same collection in which Gibson published his chapter 'Changescapes'

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